U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

THE heart TRUTH FOR WOMEN

A SPEAKER'S GUIDE

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

The Heart Truth Campaign: Serious Messages about Women and Heart Disease

Heart disease is the #1 killer of American women, but many women do not realize they are at risk. To make women more aware of the danger of heart disease, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and partner organizations are sponsoring a national campaign, *The Heart Truth*.

The goal is to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk of heart disease. *The Heart Truth* seeks to:

- Increase awareness that heart disease is the #1 killer of women.
- Increase awareness that having risk factors can lead to heart disease, disability, or death.
- Encourage women to talk to their doctors about heart disease risk factors and to take action to prevent or control these risk factors.

The Heart Truth is especially aimed at women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to rise. But its messages are also important for younger women since heart disease develops gradually and can start at a young age. Older women have an interest as well—it's never too late to take action to prevent and control the risk factors for heart disease.

The centerpiece of *The Heart Truth*—the Red Dress—was first introduced by NHLBI as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness during American Heart Month at Fashion Week in February 2003. The symbol is a red alert that reminds women of the need to protect their heart health and inspires them to take action. Since its introduction, women around the country have rallied around the Red Dress and its message—Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women—and are celebrating the cause and taking ownership of the symbol.

NHLBI urges you to use this speaker's kit to help women in your community learn *The Heart Truth*. This kit supplies all you need to hold a 1-hour session on women and heart disease, including downloadable PowerPoint slides available at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth/material/kitslide1.htm. By offering this session at your place of worship, a health fair, a club meeting, where you work, or at your local hospital, you can make a difference in women's lives in your community.

In partnership with:

American Heart Association® *Learn and Live*™

Office on Women's Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

WomenHeart
National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

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The development of *The Heart Truth* for Women: A Speaker's Kit involved the dedication of many individuals and organizations committed to educating women about their risk for heart disease and what they can do about it. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute gratefully acknowledges everyone who contributed to the development of this kit.

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Introduction

The Heart Truth is a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department on Health and Human Services (DHHS) in partnership with: Office on Women's Health, DHHS; American Heart Association; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women. In February 2003, NHLBI introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness. Women throughout the country are enthusiastically embracing the Red Dress, which is propelling a national awareness movement about women and heart disease.

The goal of *The Heart Truth* is to "put a face on heart disease" and motivate women ages 40 to 60 and health professionals to take heart health seriously and engage in action to reduce women's risk of heart disease. The campaign is the result of recommendations from more than 70 experts in women's health who helped NHLBI develop a national plan for women's heart health.

The Heart Truth campaign seeks to:

- Increase awareness that heart disease is the #1 killer of women.
- Increase awareness that having risk factors can lead to heart disease, disability, or death.
- Encourage women to talk to their doctors about heart disease risk factors and to take action to prevent or control these risk factors.

Heart Disease and Women

Many women think heart disease is a man's disease. It isn't. Heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women, regardless of race or ethnicity. In fact, one in three women dies of heart disease. It can also lead to disability and significantly decrease one's quality of life.

Despite this fact, many women do not realize their risk:

- Many women do not recognize heart disease as their leading health threat.

- Most women fail to make the connection between risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

In order to reach as many women as possible with this important information, *The Heart Truth* uses a multifaceted approach. Its components include:

- The Red Dress, launched in 2003 as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness, and the Red Dress Pin
- National Wear Red Day held on the first Friday of February each year—a day of celebration and awareness-raising about women's heart disease
- The Red Dress Collection—exquisite dresses donated to *The Heart Truth* by America's top fashion designers, which are displayed in communities throughout the country through the campaign's Single City Program
- Partnerships with a wide range of groups including women's health organizations, media, corporations, community groups, and government agencies
- This kit, designed to help get the message out in local communities
- "The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women," as well as other consumer materials
- Web pages that provide access to campaign materials and more detailed information about heart disease risk factors, including how to assess personal risk and take action against heart disease. The Web pages also include an Online Toolkit packed with ideas for planning community events to raise awareness about women and heart disease and an Activity Registry for sharing information about local programs and events.

What You Can Do

You can get involved in the national campaign by bringing *The Heart Truth* to women in your community. It's a message every woman needs to hear, because the truth is that being a woman is no protection from heart disease. Most women don't know that heart disease is the #1 killer of women and millions do not take their risk of heart disease personally or seriously. By presenting this talk, you will "put a face on heart disease," helping women to understand their personal risk of heart disease and motivating them to take action to lower that risk. *The Heart Truth* starts with you. The answers you give women in this talk will mean that fewer women have to answer to heart disease.

Using *The Heart Truth* Speaker's Kit

The Speaker's Kit, which includes this Speaker's Guide, is designed to be used by anyone with an interest in bringing women the truth about heart disease. No special training is needed. The Kit contains everything needed to quickly and easily plan and conduct a compelling 1-hour talk. It includes a 10-minute video, speaker's notes, a set of reproducible overheads, and handouts for the audience. Additional materials, including the Red Dress Pin and a DVD version of *The Heart Truth* video can be ordered from the NHLBI Health Information Center. (See page 9.) The overheads are also available as PowerPoint slides on *The Heart Truth* Web pages at: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth/material/kitslide1.htm.

The talk covers the following topics:

- Why women need to know about heart disease
- What heart disease is
- Why heart disease risk factors are important
- How to talk to a doctor or other health care provider about heart disease risk
- Taking action to lower risk
- What to do if a heart attack occurs
- Resources to help women learn more
- How to get started and stay on the road to heart health

The Heart Truth campaign seeks to increase women's awareness of the danger of heart disease and to motivate them to take action to protect their heart health. But that's not all women should know. To complete the heart care picture, NHLBI has the *Act In Time to Heart Attack Signs*: *Small Group Session Kit,* which presents the latest information about heart attack—how to recognize the signs of a heart attack and why fast action is needed to improve the chances of survival and a return to a full life. So make *The Heart Truth* the first in a series of special heart health presentations. To order, contact the NHLBI Health Information Center. (See page 9.)

Audience

The Heart Truth presentation is designed especially for women ages 40 to 60, the years when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to rise. However, younger women will be interested in its message since heart disease, which develops over time, can start at a young age—even in the teen years. And women older than 60 need to hear the presentation too, because it's never too late to take action to prevent and control the risk factors for heart disease.

The talk is designed to be given to audiences of various sizes; it works well with a small group or a large audience. However, for large audiences, use your judgment about how to distribute the handout material. You may want to arrange with someone ahead of time to distribute each handout when you ask for it, or you may want to give out a packet with all of the handouts at the beginning of the presentation.

Timing

The talk takes about 1 hour to present, allowing some time for questions and answers. It can be done in a shorter period if necessary by cutting down on the time for questions and/or condensing some of the material. It's designed to be flexible to accommodate your needs and the needs of your audience.

Setting

The Heart Truth can be presented in a wide variety of settings—hospitals and other health care facilities, adult education classes, recreation centers, sorority meetings, work sites, community group meetings, and places of worship, for example.

How To Host *The Heart Truth* Presentation

Use these simple steps to help plan and organize a successful presentation.

Finding a Sponsor and Scheduling a Presentation

- Identify groups that can incorporate *The Heart Truth* presentation in a regularly scheduled meeting. A good place to start is with organizations to which you belong. Examples are sorority alumnae groups, women's auxiliary groups, women's groups at places of worship, and so on. If these groups are unable to make *The Heart Truth* a topic for one of their meetings, they may be able to assist you in other ways, such as helping to promote a presentation.

Other groups also can sponsor a presentation. Here are some possibilities:

– Local businesses. See if they can offer *The Heart Truth* presentation as a "brown bag lunch." Or, if they cannot be a sponsor, see if they can help promote a presentation by posting flyers in their offices or by providing meeting space.

– Local hospitals. Ask if they'll include *The Heart Truth* presentation on their roster of community education classes.

– Clinics, adult education agencies, places of worship, civic clubs, YWCAs, and community centers. Even if you don't work in or belong to one of these, ask if they'll include a presentation in their continuing education classes or other group meetings. Work with the coordinator of the classes or groups about how best to incorporate *The Heart Truth* presentation into their current activities. For example, a session could be offered as one class in an existing series, as part of a scheduled class, or as a new class or program.

- Attract a sponsor by scheduling a presentation to tie in with a local, state, or national observance or event that has a connection to health, women, or the heart. Examples include:

– Late December/early January encourage heart healthy New Year's resolutions.

– February is American Heart Month with the first Friday designated as National Wear Red Day to support the issue of women and heart disease awareness.

– May has Mother's Day and National Women's Health Week and is National High Blood Pressure Education and American Stroke Month.

– September is National Cholesterol Education Month.

Getting Women To Attend

- Start promoting the presentation at least 3 weeks beforehand. Use posters (included in this kit) and flyers at community sites, such as grocery stores, places of worship, libraries, beauty salons, and community centers. Enlist local women's groups to promote the presentation through their e-mail lists, newsletters, and group meetings. Include all necessary information—topic, location, date, and time. Encourage women to bring friends and relatives to the session. See the sample flyer/newsletter and e-mail promotion in Appendix A, page 35.

- See if local media will publicize the presentation. Many newspapers and local cable companies run weekly health event calendars that are likely to list your presentation if you send them the information. Check with your local media outlets for their requirements. In general, you should submit your listings a month before the event. See the sample calendar listing in Appendix A, page 36.

- Many radio stations—particularly public radio stations—make announcements of community events, so be sure to contact them as well. See the sample radio announcer copy in Appendix A, page 36.

- Note: You can also download the promotional items from *The Heart Truth* Web pages at www.hearttruth.gov.

Preparing for a Presentation

- Look closely at the materials and become familiar with the presentation and video. The materials are meant to guide you so that you can deliver and reinforce the session's key topics. The key topics are given on pages 12 and 13 of this guide.

- Copy Appendix B onto transparencies to make overheads for your presentation. Or, if you will have access to a computer and projector for your presentation, download the overheads as a PowerPoint presentation from *The Heart Truth* Web page at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth/material/kitslide1.htm
- Copy the handouts in Appendix C. Make one set for each participant. You also can download these materials from the campaign Web pages at www.hearttruth.gov (click on "Campaign Materials;" then under "Speaker's Kit," open the file of the Speaker's Guide and print pages 59 to 63 from the PDF file.) The handouts are:

  1. What's Your Risk? quiz and Body Mass Index Chart
  2. Questions To Ask Your Doctor
  3. Heart Attack Survival Plan
  4. Resources for a Healthy Heart
  5. Heart Disease Risk Factors You Can Do Something About

- Consider using more handouts about women and heart disease. See the list of additional resources in Appendix C, Resources for a Healthy Heart, page 62, for ideas, as well as organizations that provide material about heart disease.
- Confirm ahead of time that a television and VHS videotape or DVD player are available at your presentation site so you can show the video included in this kit.
- Read through the questions and answers found in Appendix D, page 64. This resource will help you answer some of the questions that may be asked at your session.

Spreading the Message Beyond Your Event

You may want to keep up the momentum and promote *The Heart Truth* message after the event. A good way to do this is to contact health reporters from local newspapers and television stations in your area. Try to interest them in doing a feature story about women and heart disease. For instance, suggest the reporter profiles women's experiences with heart disease and what they're doing to lower their risk. You may also want to consider working with organizations in your community to sponsor a *Heart Truth* Single City Event. (See page 62.)

Learning More

For additional information about women's heart health, see the Resources for a Healthy Heart handout in Appendix C, page 62.

Presenter's Checklist

☐ *The Heart Truth* Speaker's Guide

☐ *The Heart Truth* videotape or DVD (Note: both are captioned.)

☐ VHS videotape or DVD player and television

☐ Copies of the handouts in Appendix C

If Using Overheads:

☐ Transparencies of overheads in Appendix B

☐ Overhead projector

If Using PowerPoint Presentation:

☐ Equipment for PowerPoint presentation

☐ Disk or computer with the presentation saved on it. Download from the campaign materials Web page at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth/material/kitslide1.htm

Optional

☐ Nametags

☐ *The Heart Truth* brochure (English and Spanish)

☐ "The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women"

☐ Other campaign materials such as *The Heart Truth for Women* fact sheets, Real Women Wear Red poster, and Red Dress Pin

The Heart Truth campaign materials are available online at emall.nhlbihin.net or from:

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
Phone: (301) 592-8573
TTY: (240) 629-3255

"Welcome" Overhead

The Heart Truth Script

[Show "Welcome" overhead.]

Welcome

[Welcome each participant and, if desired, provide a nametag or name tent card for identification and introduction purposes. Review any relevant facility information, such as restroom, telephone, and water fountain locations, no smoking rules, and emergency procedures.]

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. I'm very glad to see you all here, because this talk is about *The Heart Truth*, a topic of vital importance to women. It's about your heart, up close and personal, and why you need to get to know it better.

Let me begin by telling you who I am, and who's hosting this important presentation.

My name is _____. I'm a ***[nurse, member of _____, mother, etc.]***

I became involved in this presentation because _____. ***["I learned the hard way that I'm not immune to heart disease." Or: "I've seen heart disease strike a woman I know." Or: "I believe in taking action. And I know that with heart disease, there's no time to waste."]***

The group hosting this session is _____, and it's committed to helping women protect their heart health.

[Show overhead 1.]

A National Campaign

- To help women understand their risk of heart disease and take action
- Especially women ages 40 to 60
- Partnership of many groups
- Red Dress—the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness

Overhead 1

In fact, this session is part of a nationwide campaign called *The Heart Truth*.

Its goal is to help women understand their risk of heart disease and take action to lower that risk.

It's aimed especially at women ages 40 to 60, because it's during those years that a woman's risk of heart disease begins to rise.

But its message applies to younger women too, because heart disease develops over time and can start early, even in the teen years. And older women also need to take action, because it's never too late to protect your heart health.

The national campaign is being sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health. But the campaign also has many partners—including national and community organizations and health agencies—who are working to help spread the messages.

The centerpiece of the campaign is the Red Dress, introduced by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness. The Red Dress serves as a "red alert," giving women the message, "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

Your having come today is a first step toward your knowing *The Heart Truth*. You will learn about how to protect your heart and increase your chance of enjoying many quality years with your family and friends. As first steps go, it's an important one. Because heart disease is something that you really can take action against.

	Today's Session Will Cover
	▪ Why women need to know about heart disease ▪ What heart disease is ▪ Risk factors ▪ Talking to your doctor ▪ Taking action ▪ Surviving a heart attack ▪ Resources ▪ Getting on the road to heart health

Overhead 2

[Show overhead 2.]

Outline of Today's Session

Today, we've got a lot of ground to cover. The topics we'll discuss in this session are:

- Why women need to know about heart disease
- What heart disease is
- Why heart disease risk factors are so important
- How to talk to your doctor or other health care provider about heart disease risk
- Taking action to lower your risk

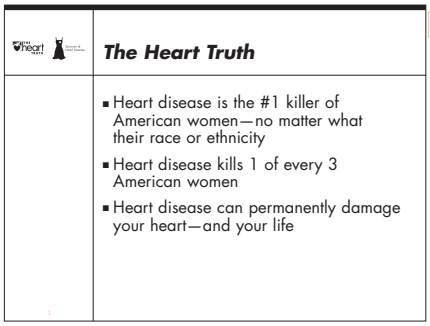
- What to do if you do have a heart attack
- Resources to help you learn more
- How to start and stay on the road to heart health

The Heart Truth

The Heart Truth. Why is the campaign using that slogan? Because women need to know the facts: ***The Heart Truth*** is that heart disease isn't a "man's problem."

It was once believed that estrogen gave women an edge against heart disease. But that edge is actually only a delay—women tend to get heart disease about 10 years later than men. But they still get it. Being a woman is no protection. If you've got a heart, heart disease could be your problem.

[Show overhead 3.]



Overhead 3

Heart disease is the #1 killer of American women—no matter what their race or ethnicity. One in three women dies of heart disease. By contrast, 1 in 30 dies of breast cancer.

But heart disease doesn't just result in death. It also can damage your heart—and your life. It can interfere with your activities and even your ability to do everyday things, such as climb steps.

If it's not treated, heart disease can lead to serious complications. These complications include angina, which is chest pain; heart failure, in which your heart loses its ability to function well; and heart attack. About two-thirds of the women who have a heart attack don't make a full recovery.

Unfortunately, there's a wide gap between what really threatens women and what they fear. Many women do not recognize heart disease as their leading health threat.

[Show overhead 4.]

	The Heart Truth
	▪ Heart disease is a "now" problem ▪ "Later" may be too late

Overhead 4

It's not wrong to be concerned about breast cancer—and, in fact, the steps that protect you against heart disease also will help protect you against many cancers.

But heart disease casts a bigger shadow over your life, and it's important to take this message to heart: Start taking action against heart disease now. As one woman doctor put it: "Heart disease is a 'now' problem. Later may be too late."

Video

I want to show you a short video—it's only 10 minutes long. You'll meet a group of women and hear their stories about heart disease, how it's affected their lives, and what they are doing about it.

[Show video.]

As you heard, learning *The Heart Truth* cannot only change and improve your life, but also save it.

What Is Heart Disease?

What is heart disease anyway? Most people have only a vague idea. And to understand why my message today is an urgent one, you need to know how heart disease develops.

Your heart is about the size of a fist. Make a fist and see. ***[Have women make a fist.]*** It's a hard-working muscle. It contracts and releases 24 hours a day, every day, no time off.

[Show overhead 5.]

To work effectively, your heart needs a steady supply of blood, which feeds the heart with oxygen and nutrients. Without nourishment, heart cells die—and the loss is permanent.

There are many forms of heart disease, but the type we'll be talking about today is called "coronary heart disease." It's the main form of heart disease, and I'll use "heart disease" to refer to it.

Heart disease develops over many years. As I said, it can start when you're in your teens.

What Is Heart Disease?

- Heart doesn't get enough nutrient-rich blood
- Chronic—develops over years
- Atherosclerosis—arteries harden as cholesterol, fat, and other substances build up in artery walls
- Blockage can result in heart attack

Overhead 5

The process is called atherosclerosis. You've probably heard of "hardening of the arteries." What happens is that plaques or fatty substances build up in the walls of blood vessels. This process can happen anywhere in the body, but in heart disease, it happens in the coronary arteries of the heart.

The plaque buildup narrows the arteries. The plaques can rupture and, as with a wound, cause a blood clot to form. This further narrows the artery and the process repeats itself. Over time, the artery gets narrower and narrower, reducing blood flow.

Eventually, blood flow may be closed off. If this happens, a heart attack occurs.

[Show overhead 6.]

No Quick Fix

- Not "fixed" by surgery or procedures, such as bypass and angioplasty
- Worsens if not treated—leads to disability or death

Overhead 6

Certain procedures are used to reopen a blocked artery. One that you've probably heard about is bypass surgery. A piece of blood vessel is grafted onto the artery so blood can flow around the blockage. Another is angioplasty, in which a thin tube containing a deflated balloon is inserted into the artery and inflated to widen the narrowing. Sometimes, angioplasty is used to insert a wire mesh stent to keep an artery open. But these procedures do not "fix" a damaged heart. And the arteries are still affected by atherosclerosis. The buildup of plaque inside the arteries will continue to worsen unless it's treated.

It's crucial to realize that there's no quick fix for heart disease.

[Show overhead 7.]

The good news is that heart disease can be prevented or controlled by making lifestyle changes, which we will discuss in more detail later, and, in most cases, by taking medication.

Good News

- Heart disease can be prevented or controlled
- Treatment includes lifestyle changes and, if needed, medication

Overhead 7

[Show overhead 8.]

Heart Disease Risk Factors—Why Me, Why Now?

All women need to take steps to protect their heart health. But as I mentioned, taking action is particularly important if you're 40 and older, and you're especially vulnerable if you're 40 to 60, the age when your risk of heart disease starts to go up. There are various reasons for this.

Estrogen does seem to play a role in preventing heart disease, although it's not understood how. When women go through menopause, the amount of estrogen in their body drops.

But another reason is that, during these years, many women develop one or more of the risk factors for heart disease.

Why Me? Why Now?

- Risk rises ages 40–60
  - Estrogen level drops during menopause
- Risk factors
  - Smoking
  - High blood pressure
  - High blood cholesterol
  - Overweight/obesity
  - Physical inactivity
  - Diabetes
  - Family history of early heart disease
  - Age (55 and older for women)

Overhead 8

What's a "risk factor?" Risk factors are behaviors or conditions that increase your chance of developing a disease. The heart disease risk factors will probably sound familiar to you. They are:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol—it's called high "blood" cholesterol because it's the amount of cholesterol circulating in your blood
- Overweight and obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Diabetes
- Family history of early heart disease
- Age, which for women is 55 and older

I'll be giving you a handout about them later. One of the dangerous aspects about them is how they gang up on you.

Heart Disease Risk Factors

- Multiply their effects
- Same lifestyle steps prevent/control many of the risk factors

Overhead 9

[Show overhead 9.]

The risk factors don't add their potential danger like one plus one equals two—they multiply it. They act both alone and together, through their effects on each other. For instance, overweight increases your chance of developing heart disease—and it increases your chance of developing high blood pressure. And that too increases your risk of heart disease.

Your risk skyrockets with each added risk factor. For example, if you have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and you smoke, you're many times more likely to develop heart disease than a woman with no risk factors.

Fortunately, you can prevent or control most of these risk factors. Only family history and age are beyond your control.

And you can do a little ganging up of your own, because the same steps will prevent or control many of the risk factors.

For example, if you follow a healthy eating plan and lose excess weight, you'll not only help prevent high blood pressure but also high blood cholesterol, overweight, and diabetes.

What's Your Heart Disease Risk?

I'm going to ask you to take a look inside yourself now. How's your heart doing in there? You may look good from the outside, but what's going on inside your body?

[Give out "What's Your Risk?" handout. Or refer the audience to the handout if you've given them a packet at the beginning.]

Here's a short quiz that will help you find out your risk. You may not be able to answer each of the questions on this handout. That's one of the issues—we too often don't know our complete "risk profile," which is based on how many risk factors we have. You may know if you're overweight, but not if you have high blood cholesterol, for example.

Take a few minutes and check off what you can. You may be surprised how easy it is to be at an increased risk.

[Give the group about 2 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.]

Finished? You may be surprised at this, but all it takes is one "yes" to be at increased risk.

A Heart-to-Heart With Your Doctor

The quiz gives you a quick look at your overall risk. But it's important for you to get your risk properly assessed. To do that, you need to see your doctor.

Your doctor can assess your risk factors. For instance, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure can be measured with simple tests.

But don't assume the doctor will bring up the topic of heart disease. Few women have a heart-to-heart talk with their doctor unless they start the conversation. You have to speak up and ask questions.

[Give out "Questions To Ask Your Doctor" handout. Or refer the audience to the handout if you've given them a packet at the beginning.]

This handout has questions to ask your doctor. You don't have to ask each and every one. It's meant to help you talk more effectively with your doctor or another health care provider.

[Show overhead 10.]

This list is a good starting point for questions you may want to ask, but of course there may be other questions you have for your doctor as well. It's a good idea to make a list of questions and take it with you to the doctor's. It's also good to write down or tape record what the doctor says, so you'll

Have a Heart-to-Heart

- Ask your doctor about your risk of heart disease
- Draw up a list of questions before your visit
- Write down or tape record what the doctor says
- Tell your doctor your lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking or being physically inactive

Overhead 10

remember it. For instance, it's hard for most of us to remember our blood pressure and blood cholesterol numbers. Naturally, it's also good to write down any recommended treatment.

Conversations are dialogues, of course, and it's important for you to tell the doctor information that can help to assess your risk. This includes family history of heart disease, if you smoke and, if so, how much, whether or not you're physically active, and if you have any symptoms such as chest pain or breathlessness. Don't be afraid to be honest—a complete picture will help your doctor develop an effective treatment plan.

[Show overhead 11.]

Key Tests for Heart Disease Risk

- Blood pressure
- Blood cholesterol
- Fasting plasma glucose (diabetes test)
- Body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference
- Electrocardiogram
- Stress test

Overhead 11

Your doctor will no doubt measure your blood pressure. Be sure you learn the results. And be sure it's being controlled to less than 140 over 90 or lower, if you have certain conditions such as diabetes. If it's not, ask what you can do to get it under control. A healthy woman should have her blood pressure taken at least once every 2 years.

To check your cholesterol, be sure your doctor does a blood test called a fasting lipoprotein analysis. A healthy woman should have this done once every 5 years. At the same time, get a fasting plasma glucose test, a blood test that tells if you have or are likely to develop diabetes.

As part of your risk profile, you should assess your body mass index—or BMI—and your waist circumference. These measures help determine your risk of heart disease and diabetes, and if you need to lose weight. BMI is a ratio of your weight to your height. Use the Body Mass Index table—it's in the "What's Your Risk?" handout. A BMI score of 25 to 29.9 means you're overweight. A BMI of 30 or more means you're obese. Waist circumference is an indicator of abdominal fat. The risk of heart disease increases for women if it's greater than 35 inches.

Another test is the EKG, or ECG. These are acronyms for the electrocardiogram. This test shows a record of your heart's electrical activity as it contracts and relaxes. It can detect various problems, such as abnormal heartbeats, muscle damage, and poor blood flow.

The stress test also records the heart's electrical activity but while you're exercising, usually on a treadmill or exercise bike. The heart works harder when you exercise, and the stress test can check if it's getting enough blood. If you can't exercise due to arthritis or another problem, a medicine can be used to get the same effect.

If you have heart disease, you may need additional tests. All of this information will help paint a picture of how your heart's doing.

Taking Action To Lower Your Risk

A lot of us are at risk. What do we do about it?

As you've heard, surveys show that women may already know many of the risk factors for heart disease, and they may know at least some of those they have. But they still don't take their risk personally or seriously.

[Show overhead 12.]

Why Women Don't Take Action Against Heart Disease

- They don't put their health as a top priority
- They think they're not old enough to be at risk
- They feel too busy to make changes in their lives
- They're already feeling stressed
- They're tired

Overhead 12

Women put off taking action to lower their risk for many reasons. For instance, one woman in the campaign's focus groups gave a reason familiar to many of us. She said, "I think we get so wrapped up in our families that we do not put our health #1."

Other women say:

- I'm not old enough to be at risk for heart disease.
- I'm just too busy to make changes in my life.
- I'm already too stressed out.
- I'm too tired.

Also, many women believe that doing one healthy thing takes care of all their risk. As one woman said, "I know smoking is a risk, but I eat well, I work out, I do everything else, but it's just...I can't get rid of the smoking." The fact is that it's important to deal with all of the risk factors.

And social pressures and barriers can make it hard to take action. We're bombarded with ads pushing foods that aren't heart healthy. We go to restaurants and get super-sized meals. We can't find a safe place to walk.

Well, sometimes there's no easy answer. You have to do what you can. Tune out those ads. Don't eat everything on your plate. Walk at the mall or join your local YWCA. Make a start today.

Keep in mind that you don't have to make all the changes at once—small steps in the right direction will put you on the road to a healthy heart.

And the good news is that, no matter what your age, no matter how many risk factors you have, it's never too late to improve your heart health. If you make just two healthy changes—eating right and getting active—you'll reduce five of the risk factors.

And this is something that you can do with your family. Do it with your husband, your kids, your grandchildren. In fact, as I said, heart disease starts early, and the earlier you help children learn healthy habits, the less they'll be at risk for heart disease.

How To Lower Heart Disease Risk

- Begin today
- Be physically active—30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most days of the week
- Follow a healthy eating plan
  - Low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol and moderate in total fat
  - Limit salt and sodium
  - If you drink alcoholic beverages, have no more than one per day

Overhead 13

[Show overhead 13.]

Here are the key steps to a heart healthy lifestyle. We'll talk about where to get help with taking these steps in a moment.

Be physically active. This means getting at least 30 minutes of a moderate-intensity activity on most and preferably all days of the week. A moderate-intensity activity would be a nice brisk walk, for example. But you don't even have to do the 30 minutes all at once. You can divide them up into periods of at least 10 minutes each.

Follow a healthy eating plan—which means one low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol and moderate in total fat. Include lots of fruits and vegetables. If you have high blood pressure, cut down on salt and sodium. And if you drink alcoholic beverages, have no more than one a day.

How To Lower Heart Disease Risk

- Maintain a healthy weight
  - Balance calories taken in with those used up in physical activity
- Stop smoking
- Manage diabetes
- Take medication, if prescribed

Overhead 14

[Show overhead 14.]

The first two steps—healthy eating and being physically active—will help you with another, which is to lose weight, if necessary, and maintain a healthy weight. To maintain a healthy weight, balance the calories you take in with those you use up in physical activity.

If you smoke, work hard to quit. It's the biggest favor you can do for your health. Start by writing down all of the reasons you want to quit. Then set a target date to quit. And don't be shy about using aids for quitting—

nicotine gum, the patch, nasal spray, or medications. Reward yourself (with something besides food) for your progress.

If you have heart disease or risk factors for it such as diabetes and are taking prescribed medication, be sure to take it as directed.

That's it. Basically, we're talking about a sensible way of living. As one woman in the focus groups said, "It's very real. Deal with it. Get on with it. You can do it."

If you have heart disease—and if you've had a heart attack—then taking action becomes even more important.

No procedure will "cure" your heart disease. But taking action will improve your condition. It can keep you from having a repeat heart attack. It can save your life.

Surviving a Heart Attack

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, it happens—a heart attack occurs. What does it mean for your health to have a heart attack? How do you know if you're having one? What do you do if you're having one?

Let me answer the last question first. The most important factor in surviving a heart attack is getting help fast. It's impossible to underscore this enough: You must call 9-1-1 within minutes of the start of heart attack signs—within 5 minutes at the most—so that you can get to the hospital quickly.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- Chest discomfort
  - Usually in the center of the chest
  - Lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back
  - Can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Other symptoms, such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness

Overheads 15 and 16

That's because the treatment advances that can save your life and minimize the damage to your heart work best if given within 1 hour of the start of warning signs.

[Show overheads 15 and 16.]

Women often don't know what these warning signs are. Most of us think a heart attack will happen like we've seen it in the movies—a dramatic event where a man, of course, suddenly clutches his chest in agony and falls over.

Often, that's not the way it happens in real life. Many heart attacks start slowly, as a mild pain or discomfort.

Here are the main signs of a heart attack in both women and men:

- Chest discomfort, usually in the center of the chest, that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, which may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Or other symptoms, such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

	To Survive a Heart Attack
	▪ Call 9-1-1 within minutes—5 minutes at most ▪ Emergency medical personnel will begin treatment at once ▪ Don't drive yourself to the hospital ▪ Uncertainty is normal—don't be embarrassed by a false alarm ▪ Plan ahead ▪ Learn the warning signs

Overhead 17

So, if you have a symptom, what do you do?

[Show overhead 17.]

When in doubt, check it out. Call 9-1-1 at once—within 5 minutes. Don't wait to take an aspirin. If you're having a heart attack, the emergency medical personnel will give you one.

Calling 9-1-1 speeds treatment. It's like bringing the hospital to you, and emergency medical personnel can get to work at once to restore your blood flow.

You may be tempted to drive yourself to the hospital. Don't—not unless you have absolutely no other option. You could pass out on the way. Also, those arriving by ambulance are treated sooner.

Women are particularly likely to delay seeking help. They're afraid of embarrassment over a false alarm or of upsetting their family. Believe me, your death will be more of an upset. And, even if it does turn out to be a false alarm, you still need to get your symptoms checked.

Another way to increase your chance of survival is by planning ahead. Learn the heart attack warning signs, make a survival plan, and talk to your family and friends to be sure they know the warning signs and what to do if a heart attack happens.

[Give out "Heart Attack Survival Plan" handout. Or refer the audience to the handout if you've given them a packet at the beginning.]

Here's a handy heart attack survival plan. It tells the signs, what to do, and lets you write in important information. Fill it out and keep it in a convenient place. Make sure your family knows where it is.

But if you prepare for the worst, you'll fare the best.

[Show overhead 18.]

Resources for a Healthy Heart

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
  www.hearttruth.gov
- American Heart Association
  Go Red for Women
  www.americanheart.org
- Office on Women's Health, DHHS,
  National Women's Health Information Center
  www.womenshealth.gov
- WomenHeart: the National Coalition
  for Women with Heart Disease
  www.womenheart.org

Overhead 18

Resources To Help

Many resources exist to help you take action against heart disease. This handout lists some of them. There are too many to talk about today but let me mention a couple of them.

[Give out "Resources for a Healthy Heart" handout. Or refer the audience to the handout if you've given them a packet at the beginning.]

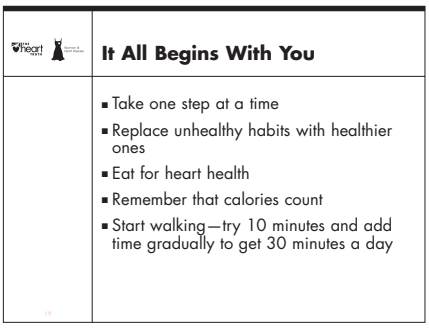
The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has publications, such as free fact sheets and special interactive Web pages, on many of the topics we've discussed here, such as high blood pressure and overweight.

They also have a popular handbook called "The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women," which explains heart disease and how to protect your heart.

Other organizations—partners in *The Heart Truth* campaign—also have information, resources, and education programs for women.

It All Begins With You

[Show overhead 19.]



Overhead 19

This has been a lot to digest. But don't be overwhelmed. Whenever you start something new, the effort can seem too great, too complicated. But, *The Heart Truth* has to start with you. I can give you information, but only you can make the changes. Keep in mind that taking action now can mean more years of healthy life. Do it for yourself and for—and with—those you love.

So how do you get started? Here are some tips on how to begin—and I'll follow them with some others on how to stick with it, because that's often the hard part.

How can you start and start today?

[Give out the "Heart Disease Risk Factors You Can Do Something About" handout. Or refer the audience to the handout if you've given them a packet at the beginning.]

A good place to start is this handout that summarizes heart disease risk factors and the steps that can help lower your risk. The trick is to make the change one step at a time. Replace some unhealthy habits with healthier ones. Get comfortable with one step and then take on another. Pretty soon, you'll wonder why you didn't make these changes sooner.

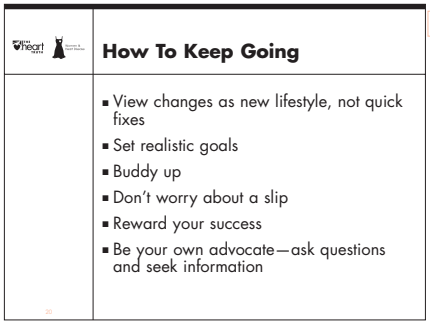
Take a first step by eating for a healthy heart. Try cutting back on saturated fat. Saturated fat raises your blood cholesterol more than anything else in your diet. Try switching from whole milk to low-fat milk and then to fat-free milk. Another step? Take the skin off the chicken before you eat it.

Here's another: Fat is rich in calories. Eat less fat, and you cut your calories, which will help you lose weight. But don't eat less fat and more food. Calories still count, even if the item is called a low-fat brownie.

Here's another: Step your way toward a regular walking program. Try walking briskly for 10 minutes a day. Then each week, increase your walking time until you're up to those 30 minutes a day.

You may be surprised that one study showed people benefit from even small changes in their routines.

So take a longer walk on the way to the office, use the stairs more, or take a walk after dinner.



Overhead 20

[Show overhead 20.]

So, once you've started, how do you keep going?

First, as I said, don't try to overhaul your life in a day. If you try to do too much at once, you'll probably feel overwhelmed and give up. This is about making changes that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Set realistic goals. Be sure that each change is do-able without a super-human effort. For instance, if you're increasing your physical activity by swimming laps, don't go for 50 laps your first day out.

Enlist the help of a buddy. Get a family member or friend to make changes with you. Go for walks together, share recipes.

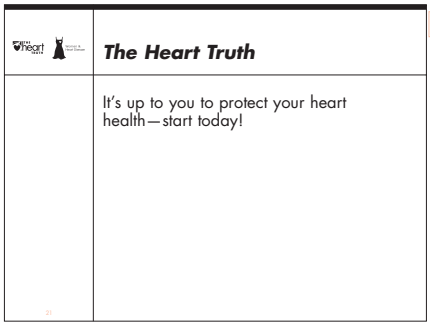
Don't kick yourself if you get off track. If you go back to eating a high fat diet for a while, don't attack yourself and give up. Everybody slips. It's what you do next that counts. Get back into your new routine.

Reward yourself. Changing habits is tough, so let yourself enjoy each success. But be careful: Don't celebrate with cake. Go to a movie, instead. Accomplishments are worth celebrating.

And finally—and this is very important—when it comes to your health, you must be your own advocate.

You can't let others, even the doctor, make your health decisions for you. Speak up. Ask for tests. Ask questions. Be sure you understand every issue and instruction. And seek out information. There's plenty of information out there.

[Show overhead 21.]



Overhead 21

So that's *The Heart Truth*. Women's risk of heart disease is serious. It's up to you to take action to protect your heart. And I congratulate you on making a start. Now keep it up.

We have time for a few questions. If I don't have the answers, I'll try to point you in the right direction to find more information.

Thank you again for coming.

THE HEART TRUTH FLYER OR NEWSLETTER PROMOTION

The Heart Truth for Women

What you learn in 1 hour could save your life.

Free Health Information Session on *The Heart Truth*: Women and Heart Disease

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women.

Get *The Heart Truth* about heart disease and women. Get the facts. Know your risk. And be motivated to take action.

Every woman needs this information. Take a first step to protect your heart. Attend this session.

The Heart Truth campaign is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with: American Heart Association; Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.

[LOCAL INFO — Date, Time, Place, RSVP info.]

THE HEART TRUTH E-MAIL PROMOTION

[SUBJECT LINE]
Get *The Heart Truth*: Women and Heart Disease

[E-MAIL MESSAGE]
***The Heart Truth:* Women and Heart Disease.**

Please join us for a free 1-hour health information session about women and heart disease on **[date]** *at* **[location]**.

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. Yet many women do not recognize heart disease as their leading health threat.

This 1-hour session can save your life—by giving you the facts about heart disease, explaining the risks and what they mean to you, encouraging dialogue with your physician, and empowering you to take action to lower your risk.

Don't miss it. Every woman needs this information. Invite your family and friends to attend with you.

RSVP by returning this e-mail. Or call **[PHONE NUMBER]**. We look forward to seeing you.

The Heart Truth campaign is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with: American Heart Association; Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.

THE HEART TRUTH CALENDAR LISTING

The Heart Truth: Women and Heart Disease. Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. Learn more. Attend this free 1-hour health information session about heart disease, women's risk factors for it, and steps for heart healthy living. **[LOCAL INFO —Date, Time, Place, RSVP info.]**

THE HEART TRUTH RADIO PROMOTION

:60 Announcer Copy

ANNOUNCER: Did you know heart disease is the #1 killer of women? Heart disease is not just a man's disease. Too many women don't take their risk seriously or personally…until it's too late. One in three American women dies of heart disease. And heart disease can cause disabilities and slow you down. Every woman needs to attend *The Heart Truth for Women*…a free, 1-hour health session about women and heart disease.

At *The Heart Truth for Women* presentation you will learn about risk factors for heart disease…like high blood pressure, smoking, and physical inactivity…to name a few. And you will learn what to do to improve your heart health.

Get *The Heart Truth for Women* on **[DATE AND TIME]** at **[LOCATION]**. Call **[PHONE NUMBER]** for more information. Get the facts. It's free. And it could save your life.

The Heart Truth is presented by **[NAME OF LOCAL ORGANIZATION]**.

The Heart Truth is a national awareness campaign sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

:30 Announcer Copy

ANNOUNCER: Did you know heart disease is the #1 killer of women? Too many women don't take their risk seriously or personally…until it's too late. Every woman needs to hear *The Heart Truth for Women*…a free, 1-hour health session about women and heart disease.

Get *The Heart Truth for Women* on **[DATE AND TIME]** at **[LOCATION]**. Call **[PHONE NUMBER]** for more information. Get the facts. It's free. And it could save your life.

The Heart Truth for Women is presented by **[NAME OF LOCAL ORGANIZATION]**.

The Heart Truth campaign is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Welcome

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

A National Campaign

- To help women understand their risk of heart disease and take action
- Especially women ages 40 to 60
- Partnership of many groups
- Red Dress—the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness

1

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Today's Session Will Cover

- Why women need to know about heart disease
- What heart disease is
- Risk factors
- Talking to your doctor
- Taking action
- Surviving a heart attack
- Resources
- Getting on the road to heart health

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

The Heart Truth

- Heart disease is the #1 killer of American women—no matter what their race or ethnicity
- Heart disease kills 1 of every 3 American women
- Heart disease can permanently damage your heart—and your life

3

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

The Heart Truth

- Heart disease is a "now" problem
- "Later" may be too late

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

What Is Heart Disease?

- Heart doesn't get enough nutrient-rich blood
- Chronic—develops over years
- Atherosclerosis—arteries harden as cholesterol, fat, and other substances build up in artery walls
- Blockage can result in heart attack

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

No Quick Fix

- Not "fixed" by surgery or procedures, such as bypass and angioplasty
- Worsens if not treated—leads to disability or death

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Good News

- Heart disease can be prevented or controlled
- Treatment includes lifestyle changes and, if needed, medication

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Why Me? Why Now?

- Risk rises ages 40–60
  - Estrogen level drops during menopause
- Risk factors
  - Smoking
  - High blood pressure
  - High blood cholesterol
  - Overweight/obesity
  - Physical inactivity
  - Diabetes
  - Family history of early heart disease
  - Age (55 and older for women)

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Heart Disease Risk Factors

- Multiply their effects
- Same lifestyle steps prevent/control many of the risk factors

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Have a Heart-to-Heart

- Ask your doctor about your risk of heart disease
- Draw up a list of questions before your visit
- Write down or tape record what the doctor says
- Tell your doctor your lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking or being physically inactive

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Key Tests for Heart Disease Risk

- Blood pressure
- Blood cholesterol
- Fasting plasma glucose (diabetes test)
- Body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference
- Electrocardiogram
- Stress test

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Why Women Don't Take Action Against Heart Disease

- They don't put their health as a top priority
- They think they're not old enough to be at risk
- They feel too busy to make changes in their lives
- They're already feeling stressed
- They're tired

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

How To Lower Heart Disease Risk

- Begin today
- Be physically active—30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most days of the week
- Follow a healthy eating plan
  - Low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol and moderate in total fat
  - Limit salt and sodium
  - If you drink alcoholic beverages, have no more than one per day

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

How To Lower Heart Disease Risk

- Maintain a healthy weight
  - Balance calories taken in with those used up in physical activity
- Stop smoking
- Manage diabetes
- Take medication, if prescribed

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- Chest discomfort
  - Usually in the center of the chest
  - Lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back
  - Can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Other symptoms, such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

To Survive a Heart Attack

- Call 9-1-1 within minutes—5 minutes at most
- Emergency medical personnel will begin treatment at once
- Don't drive yourself to the hospital
- Uncertainty is normal—don't be embarrassed by a false alarm
- Plan ahead
- Learn the warning signs

Resources for a Healthy Heart

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
  www.hearttruth.gov
- American Heart Association
  Go Red for Women
  www.americanheart.org
- Office on Women's Health, DHHS,
  National Women's Health Information Center
  www.womenshealth.gov
- WomenHeart: the National Coalition
  for Women with Heart Disease
  www.womenheart.org

THE heart TRUTH Women & Heart Disease

It All Begins With You

- Take one step at a time
- Replace unhealthy habits with healthier ones
- Eat for heart health
- Remember that calories count
- Start walking—try 10 minutes and add time gradually to get 30 minutes a day

THE heart TRUTH Women & Heart Disease

How To Keep Going

- View changes as new lifestyle, not quick fixes
- Set realistic goals
- Buddy up
- Don't worry about a slip
- Reward your success
- Be your own advocate—ask questions and seek information

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

The Heart Truth

It's up to you to protect your heart health—start today!

WHAT'S YOUR RISK?

Here is a quick quiz to find out your risk of a heart attack.

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Do you smoke?
☐	☐	Is your blood pressure 140/90 mmHg or higher, OR have you been told by your doctor that your blood pressure is too high?
☐	☐	Has your doctor told you that your total cholesterol level is 200 mg/dL or higher, or your HDL (good cholesterol) is less than 40 mg/dL?
☐	☐	Has your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55 OR your mother or sister had one before age 65?
☐	☐	Do you have diabetes OR a fasting blood sugar of 126 mg/dL or higher, OR do you need medicine to control your blood sugar?
☐	☐	Are you over age 55?
☐	☐	Do you have a body mass index (BMI) score of 25 or more?
☐	☐	Do you get less than a total of 30 minutes of physical activity on most days?
☐	☐	Has a doctor told you that you have angina (chest pains), OR have you had a heart attack?

Are You At Risk?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions, you are at an increased risk of having a heart attack.

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

BODY MASS INDEX

Here is a chart for men and women that gives the body mass index (BMI) for various heights and weights.*

BODY MASS INDEX

HEIGHT	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
4'10"	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148
5'0"	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158
5'1"	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164
5'3"	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175
5'5"	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186
5'7"	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198
5'9"	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209
5'11"	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222
6'1"	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235
6'3"	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248

* Weight is measured with underwear but no shoes.

What Does Your BMI Mean?

Normal weight: BMI = 18.5 – 24.9.
Good for you! Try not to gain weight.

Overweight: BMI = 25 – 29.9.
Do not gain any weight, especially if your waist measurement is high. You need to lose weight if you have two or more risk factors for heart disease and are overweight, or have a high waist measurement, for women more than 35 inches.

Obese: BMI = 30 or greater.
You need to lose weight. Lose weight slowly—about 1/2 to 2 pounds a week. See your doctor or a nutritionist if you need help.

Source: Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, in cooperation with the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institutes of Health; NIH Publication No. 98-4083; September 1998.

Another way to find out your BMI is to use this three-step method: Multiply your weight in pounds (in underwear but no shoes) by 703; divide the answer by your height in inches; then divide that answer by your height in inches.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

1. What is my risk for heart disease?
2. What is my blood pressure, what does it mean for me, and what do I need to do about it?
3. What are my cholesterol numbers—total cholesterol, LDL ("bad") cholesterol, HDL ("good") cholesterol, and triglycerides—what do they mean for me, and what do I need to do about them?
4. What is my body mass index and waist circumference measurement, and do they indicate that I need to lose weight for my health?
5. What is my blood sugar level, and am I at risk for diabetes?
6. What other screening or diagnostic tests for heart disease do I need? How often should I return for checkups for heart health?
7. What can you do to help me quit smoking?
8. How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
9. What is a heart healthy eating plan for me? Should I see a registered dietitian or a qualified nutritionist to learn more about a heart healthy heart eating plan?
10. How can I tell if I am having a heart attack?

HEART ATTACK SURVIVAL PLAN

Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs

Learn the warning signs and steps to take if a heart attack happens. You can save a life—maybe your own.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- **Chest Discomfort.** Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
- **Discomfort in Other Areas of the Upper Body.** This may be felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of Breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other Signs.** May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

Fast Action Saves Lives

If you or someone you are with begins to have chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other symptoms of a heart attack, call 9-1-1 right away. Don't wait more than a few minutes—5 minutes at most—to call 9-1-1.

If you are having symptoms and cannot call 9-1-1, have someone else drive you to the hospital right away. Never drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other choice.

Information to Share With Emergency Personnel/Hospital Staff

Medicines you are taking:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Medicines you are allergic to:

_____

_____

_____

_____

If symptoms stop completely in less than 5 minutes, you should still call your health care provider.
Phone number during office hours:

_____

Phone number after office hours:

_____

Person you would like contacted if you go to the hospital:
Name:

_____

Home phone number:

_____

Work phone number:

_____

RESOURCES FOR A HEALTHY HEART

For additional information on heart disease risk factors and how to take action toward having a healthy heart, contact the organizations listed below:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
Telephone: (301) 592-8573
TTY: (240) 629-3255
Fax: (301) 592-8563
E-mail: nhlbiinfo@rover.nhlbi.nih.gov

Materials available from the NHLBI Health Information Center provide information about the prevention and treatment of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, diabetes, and smoking.

NHLBI maintains a Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov. The site includes information and publications for health professionals, patients, and the public. Special interactive Web pages offer self-assessment quizzes, medication information, heart healthy lifestyle tips, and more.

The Heart Truth campaign Web pages can be found at www.hearttruth.gov. The Web pages provide access to all campaign materials, including the Red Dress Pin; Online Toolkits; Activity Registry; and more detailed information about heart disease risk factors, including how to assess personal risk and take action against heart disease.

For information about *The Heart Truth* Single City Stop Program, contact the NHLBI Health Information Center.

American Heart Association
National Center
7272 Greenville Avenue
Dallas, TX 75231
Phone: (888) MY-HEART (694-3278)
AHA Web site: www.americanheart.org

The American Heart Association aims to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by providing information on related topics. Through its national women's campaign, Go Red for Women, women can access educational tools and free programs to help them reduce their risk. To learn more about the prevention and treatment of heart disease and stroke, and Go Red for Women, contact the American Heart Association.

WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
818 18th Street, NW, Suite 730
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 728-7199
Web site: www.womenheart.org

Founded by women with heart disease, WomenHeart provides women with information about the risks of heart disease, prevention, and survival skills. Useful resources include "Access to Healthcare," "Women and Heart Disease," and "Fitness & Wellness," which can be viewed at www.womenheart.org.

Office on Women's Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 730B
Washington, DC 20201
Phone: (800) 994-WOMAN or (800) 994-9662
Web site: www.womenshealth.gov

Help yourself to better health! It's easier than you think. Use the National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) to get free, trustworthy women's health information on more than 800 topics. Find reliable publications and resources on heart disease, diabetes, nutrition and physical activity, eating disorders, and much more. Visit www.womenshealth.gov/ForYourHeart to fill out a profile of your health and lifestyle, and you will receive a series of articles detailing the latest information on exercise, nutrition, smoking, diabetes, cholesterol, high blood pressure and other factors that affect you and your risk for heart disease—all tailored to your needs.

THE heart TRUTH

Women & Heart Disease

HEART DISEASE RISK FACTORS YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT

Risk Factors	Facts You Need To Know	Take These Steps To Prevent Heart Disease
High blood pressure High blood pressure (hypertension) is called the silent killer.	When your blood pressure is high, your heart works harder than it should to move blood to all parts of the body. If not treated, high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, eye and kidney problems, and death. Check your number: Normal is less than 120/80 mmHg Prehypertension is 120-139/80-89 mmHg High blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or more (based on reading at two different visits)	■ Have your doctor check your blood pressure. ■ Aim for a healthy weight. ■ Become physically active. ■ Follow a healthy eating plan, including food lower in salt and sodium. ■ Limit alcoholic beverages. ■ Take medication, if prescribed.
High blood cholesterol Cholesterol in your arteries is like rust in a pipe. When there is too much cholesterol in the blood, the arteries become clogged, which leads to heart disease.	Total cholesterol: Desirable less than 200 mg/dL Borderline-high 200–239 mg/dL High 240 mg/dL or more If you are age 20 or older, have your blood cholesterol checked by a blood test called a "lipoprotein profile" every 5 years, or more often if it is high. If it is high, ask your doctor how to lower it.	■ Get your blood cholesterol level checked. ■ Learn what your numbers mean. ■ Follow a low saturated fat and low cholesterol eating plan. ■ Become physically active. ■ Aim for a healthy weight. ■ Take medication, if prescribed.
Smoking You put your health and your family's health at risk when you smoke.	Cigarette smoking is addictive. It harms your heart and lungs and can greatly increase your risk of a heart attack.	■ Stop smoking now or cut back gradually. ■ If you can't quit the first time, keep trying. ■ If you don't smoke, don't start.
Overweight Overweight occurs when extra fat is stored in your body.	Excess weight increases your risk of a heart attack and of developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes.	■ Maintain a healthy weight. Try not to gain extra weight. ■ If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly. Lose ½ to 2 pounds a week.
Diabetes When the sugar in the blood is high, your body cannot use the food you eat for energy.	Diabetes is serious; you may have it and not know you have it. It can lead to heart attacks, blindness, amputations, and kidney disease.	■ Find out if you have diabetes. Get your blood sugar level checked by your doctor.
Physical inactivity Living a sedentary lifestyle can increase chances of heart disease and take away years from your life.	Physical inactivity increases your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes. Children and adults should do 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity each day.	■ Become active; get 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity each day. You can build up to 30 minutes each day by walking, dancing, or exercising for 10 minutes each time.

SPEAKER'S RESOURCE FOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does stress cause heart disease?
There appears to be a strong connection between stress and heart disease. For instance, many people say that an emotionally upsetting event preceded their heart attack. There also is evidence that those who become easily emotionally upset are more likely to develop hardening of the arteries. In addition, some common ways women cope with stress are bad for your heart—such as overeating, drinking too much, and smoking.

Adopting good lifestyle behaviors and a positive outlook appears to help prevent and manage heart disease. Such practices seem to make women less vulnerable to heart disease and heart attack. For instance, regular physical activity relieves stress and lowers the risk of heart disease. And supportive relationships—from a spouse or support group or religious organization—appear to improve women's ability to cope with heart disease.

It's suggested that you ease stress by spending time reflecting on your life, sorting out priorities, and establishing new meaning in life. Having a positive outlook can improve the quality of your life and make you less vulnerable to heart disease.

This is especially important if you've had a heart attack. Feelings of guilt and loss of independence seem to affect how well women do. Supportive relationships are particularly important at such a time.

Should hormone therapy be used to reduce the risk of heart disease?
Until recently, many postmenopaual women were prescribed menopausal hormone therapy to help prevent heart disease. Menopausal hormone therapy can involve the use of estrogen plus progestin or estrogen alone.

Research now shows that estrogen plus progestin therapy increases the chances of developing heart disease, stroke, blood clots, and breast cancer. It also doubles the risk of dementia and does not protect women against memory loss. Research on estrogen-alone therapy shows it increases the risk for stroke and blood clots, but has no effect on heart disease and colorectal cancer, and an uncertain effect on breast cancer. Estrogen alone gives no protection against memory loss. Both estrogen and estrogen combined with progestin increase the risk of developing urinary incontinence and worsen the symptoms of incontinent women.

If you are on this medication to prevent heart disease or another chronic condition, such as osteoporosis, talk with your doctor about other approaches. If you decide to go ahead with it, use the lowest dose for as brief a period of time as possible.

Should I see a doctor before starting a physical activity program?
Most people don't need to see a doctor before they start a moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. You should check first with a doctor if you have heart trouble or have had a heart attack, if you're over age 50 and are not used to doing a moderate-intensity activity, if you have a family history of heart disease at an early age, or if you have any other serious health problem.

SPEAKER'S RESOURCE FOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(continued)

I've heard about the DASH eating plan. What is it and how can I find out more about it?
DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. It's an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, and low-fat dairy products. It is rich in magnesium, potassium, and calcium, as well as protein and fiber. It's low in saturated and total fat and cholesterol, and limits red meat, sweets, and sugar-containing beverages.

It was tested in clinical studies and found to lower elevated blood pressure and help prevent high blood pressure. One of the clinical studies also found that people who followed the DASH eating plan and cut down on sodium got the biggest reductions in blood pressure.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has a free fact sheet about the DASH eating plan. You can get it from the Health Information Center, which is listed on your resources handout, or from the Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov. The fact sheet tells you how many servings of different food groups to have and gives you a week's worth of menus, plus some recipes.

What is a fasting blood glucose test?
This is one of the tests used to diagnose diabetes or prediabetes, which are risk factors for heart disease. If you have prediabetes, you are at a high risk of developing diabetes, as well as heart disease and stroke.

The other diagnostic test for diabetes is the oral glucose tolerance test. Both are done on a blood sample after a fast to see how much glucose (or sugar) is in the blood. With the oral glucose tolerance test, blood samples are taken before and after you drink a high-glucose beverage.

You should ask your doctor which test is appropriate for you.
Being tested for diabetes and prediabetes is recommended every 3 years for those over age 45. It also should be considered for those below age 45 who have one or more additional risk factor for diabetes besides age.

The risk factors for diabetes include:

- Over age 45
- Overweight
- A parent, brother, or sister with diabetes
- Family background of African American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic American/Latino
- Gestational diabetes or having given birth to at least one baby weighing more than 9 pounds
- High blood pressure
- Not having normal cholesterol levels: An HDL cholesterol of 35 mg/dL or lower or a triglyceride level of 250 mg/dL or higher
- Not physically active
- Prediabetes
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (in which there is insulin resistance and a woman's body produces an excess of male hormones)

If you have diabetes, you'll need to take action to control your condition and prevent complications. If you have prediabetes, you'll need to take action too to prevent developing diabetes. In both cases, the steps include making lifestyle changes, such as losing weight.

SPEAKER'S RESOURCE FOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(continued)

What is insulin resistance?
Insulin is a hormone produced in the pancreas. It helps the body use glucose for energy. In insulin resistance, the body is unable to properly use the insulin it produces. Insulin resistance is often the first step in a pathway that leads to prediabetes and then type 2 diabetes, in which either the body is even less able to use insulin correctly or the pancreas no longer makes enough of it.

Shouldn't aspirin be taken daily to prevent a heart attack?
Aspirin has only been shown to lower the risk of a heart attack for those who have already had one. It also can help to keep arteries open in those who have had a heart bypass or other artery-opening procedure.

But it is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for preventing heart attacks in those who have never had one or had a stroke. In fact, it can be harmful for some people. However, a recent large study found that in women 65 and older, taking low-dose aspirin every day may help to prevent a stroke.

Aspirin is a powerful drug and can have side effects, such as increasing your chance of ulcers and kidney disease. It also can mix dangerously with other drugs, including some over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements.

It should only be taken with your doctor's specific recommendation and guidance.

If I take nitroglycerin pills for a heart condition, should I take one first, before calling 9-1-1?

In general, yes, you would take nitroglycerin at once, even before calling 9-1-1. But to be sure that this is so in your case, check with your doctor.

Discrimination Prohibited: Under provisions of applicable public laws enacted by Congress since 1964, no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, handicap, or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity (or, on the basis of sex, with respect to any education program and activity) receiving Federal financial assistance.
In addition, Executive Order 11141 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age by contractors and subcontractors in the performance of Federal contracts, and Executive Order 11246 states that no federally funded contractor may discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Therefore, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute must be operated in compliance with these laws and Executive Orders.

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